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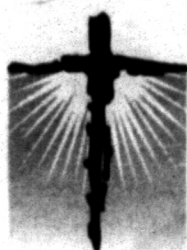
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MISSISSIPPI
BAPTISTS

Craftsman creates miniature Memorial

By Tony Martin
Associate Editor

The Memorial to the Missing, located at the Mississippi Baptist Convention Board building in downtown Jackson, stands in mute testimony to the 50 million-plus unborn children who have been aborted since the U.S. Supreme Court handed down their Roe v. Wade decision in 1973 that legalized abortion across American throughout all nine months of pregnancy.

Churches and individuals from all over the state have contributed millions of pennies to the Memorial - each copper cent representing one of those innocent lives lost.

Churches have collected pennies in bags, jars, cans, and other receptacles, but Alta Woods Church in Jackson has one of the most unique collection points of any church: a scale model of the Memorial itself.

The church has given over 36,000 pennies to the Memorial, and the scale model at the church is the craftsmanship of Ray Brown, a senior adult member. Notably, Brown is legally blind.

The retired pipe fitter was born in a little community near Port Gibson called Willow Springs. "My grandfather had a big general store there. He was a farmer and bee keeper, but I left after the first year to move to the Delta. It was tornado city; I'd been through three different tornadoes before I was five years old.

"I moved from there to a little community called Smeads - that's where Roosevelt hunted the bear. My daddy bought a plantation called Root-Hog between Rolling Fork and Mayersville, and we were there until the '27 flood. We finally ended up in Rolling Fork."

Brown has the uncanny ability to simply look at something and then build it. "Of course, if it's pretty intricate, I might have to look at it twice," he pointed out.

For Alta Woods Church's Vacation Bible School a few years back, Brown built a rickshaw - not a scale model, but a full-size, working rickshaw.

"My daughter-in-law found a picture of a rickshaw on the Internet," he said, "and she blew it up so I could see it. I built it from that."

The rickshaw currently rests in Brown's shop behind his house. It is an ornate piece of work, with a red cloth seat and a black canopy. It is perfectly balanced, and one person can pull another with ease.

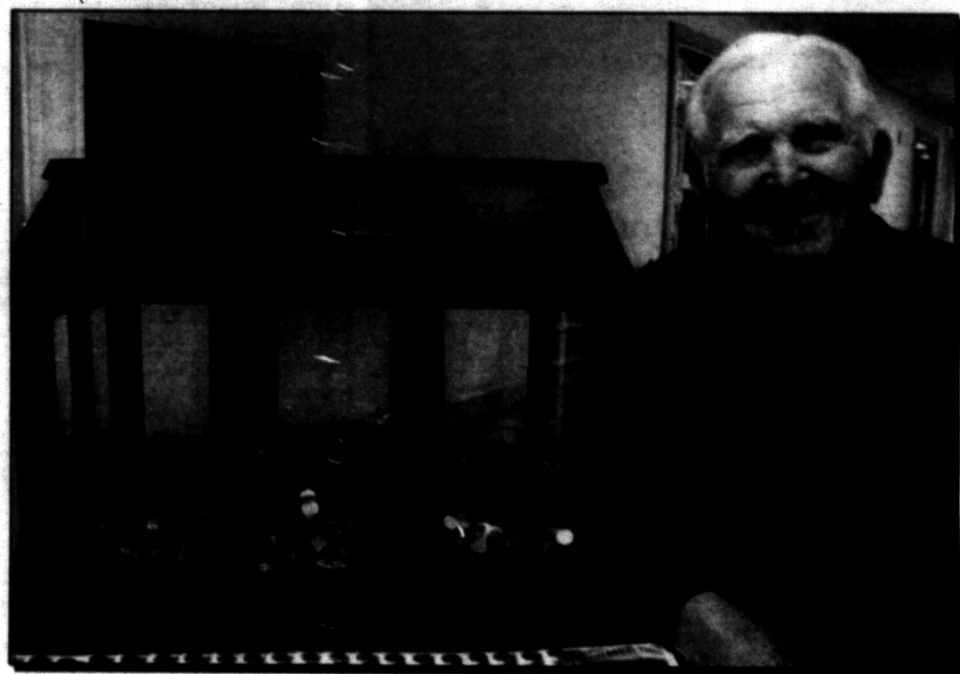
Brown's shop is a marvel of organization and cleanliness. "I can't stand to have stuff under my feet," he said. Tools are hung on the walls, and many are color-coded for ease of use. The shop is a labyrinth of rooms, each one serving a specific purpose.

The Memorial to the Missing project was another triumph for Brown. "Sid [Johnson, minister of education/senior adults at Alta Woods Church] showed me a picture of the Memorial," Brown said, "but it didn't show the detail I needed, so my wife and I went downtown to see the original. That's all I needed."

"We wanted to do a penny drive with the church," said Johnson, "so I called and talked to Jimmy Porter [executive director of the Mississippi Baptist Christian Action Commission] and told him we wanted to participate. I asked Ray, 'Can you build us a model of this?' I wanted it to be the size of one of the food trays we use for Wednesday night suppers. I didn't hear from him for about a week until he showed up at the church with it."

The model is built from Plexiglas and simple pine wood. "I just sawed out the wood and cut the Plexiglas," Brown said.

The Memorial to the Missing was dedicated in May 2006 and is still actively accepting pennies from persons and groups interested in participating in the project. There are slightly more than 47.8 million pennies currently in the Memorial, just 2.3 million pennies from the goal.



MEMORIAL IN MINATURE - Ron Brown, a member of Alta Woods Church, Jackson, stands next to the miniature replica of the Memorial to the Missing that he built in his home shop. The Memorial to the Missing is located at the Mississippi Baptist Convention Board Building in downtown Jackson, where each penny represents one of the 50 million children aborted since Roe v. Wade, the 1973 U.S. Supreme Court ruling that legalized abortion throughout all nine months of pregnancy. Alta Woods Church has collected over 36,000 pennies for the Memorial.

For more information on the project, the Mississippi Baptist Christian Action Commission can be contacted at P.O. Box 530, Jackson, MS 39205-0530. Telephone: (601) 292-3329 or toll-free outside Jackson (800) 748-1651. E-mail: rwood@christianaction.com. Web site: www.mbc.org

Brown continues to tinker. He displayed a long, wooden box - something like a footlocker. "This was originally a shipping box we used to ship what we called our 'long tools,'" Brown stated.

"The company I worked for, Southeast Automatic Sprinkler Company, would ship our tools ahead of us from one job to another, so they'd be there when we arrived. I had an original box, and my daughter looked at it and said, 'Can you put legs on this?'"

"You know, you can move a mountain if you have the right tools, so I started making these. You can put flowers in it or use it for a coffee table, and we've been selling them."

Brown said he builds whatever comes to his mind - walking staffs, crosses from driftwood, and so forth. "I can build most anything, but I can't build a mule-headed cow," said Brown.

"We went to Jamaica on a mission trip a few years ago and Ray just about worked me to death," said Johnson. "We'd stop just long enough to get a sip of water, and Ray would say, 'OK, fellows, it's time to get back to work.' He's one of the hardest working men I've ever seen, and he loves the Lord with all his heart."

"He would do anything for you, and what's more, he can do anything."

One Voice on tour



Members of the One Voice vocal group will be leaving March 25 for an international performance tour that will include the countries of New Zealand and Australia. One Voice is an auditioned ensemble made up of men and women from across Mississippi who have come together, uniting gifts and efforts for the specific purpose of praising Jesus Christ and proclaiming His gospel through the areas of music and drama. They are sponsored by the Church Music Department of the Mississippi Baptist Convention Board (MBCB) and directed by Graham Smith, MBCB Church Music Director. (Photo by William H. Perkins Jr.)



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It's not all that unusual to hear politicians touting their records from the stump and on television, radio, and in newspapers as they seek re-election or higher office. Likewise, it's not all that unusual for politicians to pitch what they consider their strong points and quietly sweep the rest of their record under the rug.

That's exactly what is happening in a pair of important runoffs for open congressional seats, where one former Mississippi legislator and one sitting Mississippi legislator want a promotion to Washington. We've heard their manifold claims of service and leadership to the people of the state, but there's apparently at least one black mark on both their records they are mighty reluctant to bring up in their slick media buys.

Charlie Ross, a candidate for the seat being vacated by Chip Pickering in the Third Congressional District, and Steve Holland, a candidate for the seat being vacated by Roger Wicker in the First Congressional District, both have solid legislative voting

records in favor of gambling expansion — but you won't hear that in any of their current commercials or read of those votes in their newspaper ads.

As gamblers gobble up more of our states and continue their move into the federal government to get what they want on a national scale, it's important that we seriously consider whether candidates with a proven pro-gambling record should carry that record into Congress with them.

Ross gave up his Mississippi Senate seat in a failed bid for lieutenant governor last year. Holland continues to represent the people of District 16 in the Mississippi House of Representatives.

While serving in the Mississippi Senate from Rankin County in 2005, Ross was a leader in helping pass House Bill 45, which lifted longtime restrictions on the locations of casinos and allowed the gambling halls to expand inland from their over-the-water moorings along the Mississippi Gulf Coast.

House Bill 45 was a sweetheart deal, giving the gamblers everything they could ever want. Not only did the bill allow them to move their gambling halls 800 feet inland, the gamblers were able to exclude from that 800-foot count any rights-of-way such as highways, streets, and utilities.

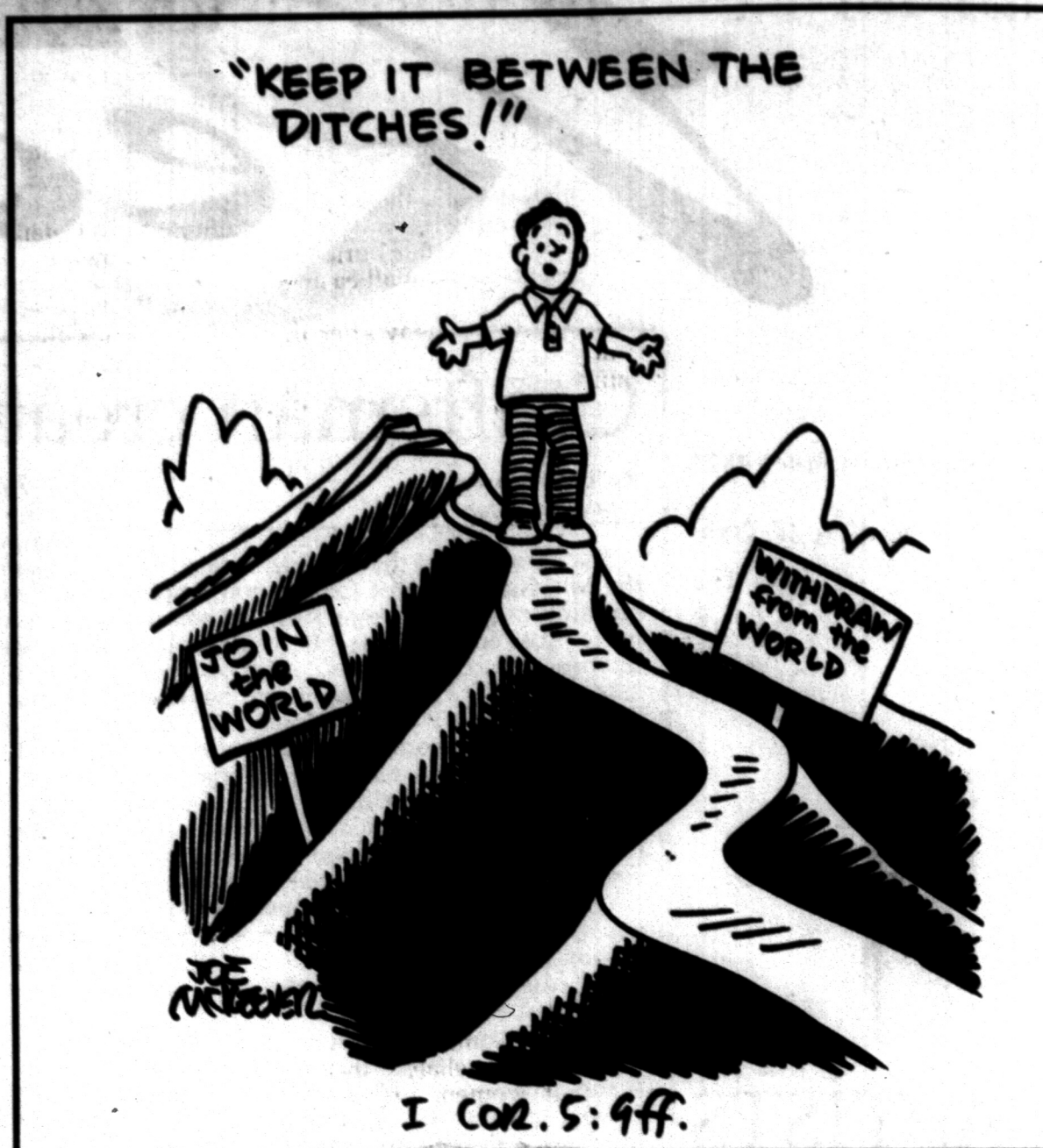
That means the gambling halls are able to move considerably farther inland than 800 feet.

For his leadership role in passing House Bill 45, Ross received the endorsement of the pro-gambling Sun-Herald newspaper in Biloxi during his bid last year for lieutenant governor. "But at a moment when that [gambling] industry was endangered, Ross did what was necessary to preserve it," the Sun-Herald intoned on July 26.

Ross had a television commercial specially made for the Gulf Coast during the lieutenant governor's race, which can be viewed at www.youtube.com, search for "Charlie Ross Coast Commercial."

The commercial uses code words such as "onshore rebuilding" to describe Ross' vote on House Bill 45, never once mentioning casinos as being the object of that "onshore rebuilding" or even the phrase, "House Bill 45." At the end of the commercial a voice intones, "Charlie Ross supported us."

Under the rug



Can there be any doubt that Ross was touting his vote on House Bill 45? Needless to say, that commercial didn't get much play in other parts of the state where gambling is not looked upon as favorably by the voters.

Although not as outspoken as Ross in his support of House Bill 45, Steve Holland's media buys likewise don't mention his vote in favor of onshore gambling — one of the few legislators from northeast Mississippi to do so. It appears highlighting one's pro-gambling record in a region of the state known as the buckle of the Bible Belt isn't such a good idea for politicians like Holland when they want a promotion.

How else to explain the complete absence of any mention of his pro-gambling vote on House Bill 45?

Some people argue that House Bill 45 is in the past now, and should be kept there. However, politicians must stand on the totality of their records. While both men may have shepherded better legislation through their respective chambers while serving in the Legislature, they must also answer for the dark day they turned our state over to the gamblers in House Bill 45.

The question for voters in this election is whether we want to send anyone to Congress who has a proven pro-gambling voting record — regardless of whether their name is Ross, Holland, Perkins, or anyone else.

Given the implications for the future of our state and nation, the voters must decide on no less than the answer to that question.

Editor's note: Sen. Ross provided the following statement in response to a request from The Baptist Record. Rep. Holland did not respond to

repeated requests for a statement over the past two weeks.

In the wake of Katrina, I fully supported Governor Haley Barbour's legislative recovery plan. I stood up for wind pool legislation to stabilize insurance rates, strict building codes for all structures, legislation reforming and consolidating public utility regulation, housing assistance programs, bills to help local governments with their debt obligations until their tax base could be restored, and legislation providing additional law enforcement resources.

As a part of this recovery plan, I supported House Bill 45, which allowed the gaming industry to build safe buildings up to 800 feet on dry land rather than on the same barges that had been thrown up on shore like toothpicks by Katrina. This change, in only two counties, was necessary as a prudent safety measure and was not, in my judgment, an appreciable expansion of gaming. I have always been opposed to the expansion of gaming in other counties, and offered an amendment to HB45 to prohibit future referendums in counties where gaming does not exist. This continues to be my position.

The recovery legislation, combined with the unprecedented federal assistance (given the unprecedented scope of the disaster), the efforts of thousands of volunteers and church groups (including my church), and most importantly, the courage and character of the coast residents, has enabled the Coast to begin a recovery that has made the nation look at Mississippi with pride. The recovery is far from complete, however, and a sustained effort will be necessary for the foreseeable future.

Easter Resurrection: historical fact or fantasy?

EDITOR'S NOTE: The following article on the resurrection of Jesus Christ is adapted from the new *Apologetics Study Bible* released by the B&H Publishing Group of LifeWay Christian Resources of the Southern Baptist Convention. The study Bible's 100-plus articles and other features focus on defending the Christian faith. William Lane Craig is a research professor of philosophy at Talbot School of Theology in La Mirada, Ca.

NASHVILLE, Tenn. (BP) — To answer the question of Jesus' resurrection from a historical standpoint, we must first determine what facts concerning the fate of Jesus of Nazareth can be credibly established on the basis of the evidence and, second, consider what is the best explanation of those facts. At least four facts about the fate of the historical Jesus are widely accepted by New Testament historians today.

— After His crucifixion, Jesus was buried by Joseph of Arimathea in a tomb. This fact is highly significant because it means that the location of Jesus' tomb was known in Jerusalem to Jews and Christians alike.

New Testament scholars have established the fact of Jesus' entombment on the basis of evidence such as the following:

- Jesus' burial is attested in the information (from before A.D. 36) that was handed on by Paul in 1 Corinthians 15:3-5.
- The burial story is independently attested in the source material that was used by Mark in writing his Gospel.
- Given the understandable hostility in the early Christian movement toward the Jewish national leaders, Joseph of Arimathea, as a member of the Jewish high court that condemned Jesus, is unlikely to have been a Christian invention.

- The burial story is simple and lacks any signs of being developed into a legend.
- No other competing burial story exists. For these and other reasons, the majority of NT scholars concur that Jesus was in fact buried by Joseph of Arimathea in a tomb.

— On the Sunday after the crucifixion, Jesus' tomb was found empty by a group of His women followers. Among the reasons that have led most scholars to this conclusion are the following:

- In stating that Jesus "was buried, that He was raised on the third day," the old information transmitted by Paul in 1 Corinthians 15:3-5 implies the empty tomb.
- The empty tomb story also has multiple and independent attestations in Mark, Matthew and John's source material, some of which is very early.
- The empty tomb story as related in Mark, our earliest account, is simple and lacks signs of having been embellished as a legend.
- Given that in Jewish patriarchal culture the testimony of women was regarded as unreliable, the fact that women, rather than men, were the chief witnesses to the empty tomb is best explained by the narrative's being true.
- The earliest known Jewish response to the proclamation of Jesus' resurrection, namely, the "disciples came during the night and stole Him while we were sleeping" (Matthew 28:12-15), was itself an attempt to explain why the body was missing and thus presupposes the empty tomb. For these and other reasons, a majority of scholars hold firmly to the reliability of the biblical testimony to Jesus' empty tomb.

— On multiple occasions, and under various circumstances, different individuals and groups saw Jesus alive after His death. This fact is almost universally acknowledged among New Testament scholars for the following reasons:

- Given its early date as well as Paul's personal acquaintance with the people involved, the list of eyewitnesses to Jesus' resurrection appearances that is quoted by Paul in 1 Corinthians 15:5-8 guarantees that such appearances occurred.
- The appearance narratives in the Gospels provide multiple, independent attestations of the appearances. Even the most skeptical critics acknowledge that the disciples had seen Jesus alive after His death.
- The original disciples suddenly and sincerely came to believe Jesus was risen from the dead, despite having every predisposition to the contrary. Consider the situation the disciples faced following Jesus' crucifixion:
 - Their leader was dead and Jewish messianic expectations did not expect a Messiah who, instead of triumphing over Israel's enemies, would be shamefully executed as a criminal.
 - According to Old Testament law, Jesus' execution exposed Him as a heretic, a man accursed by God.
 - Jewish beliefs about the afterlife precluded anyone's rising from the dead to glory and immortality before the general resurrection of the dead at the end of the world.

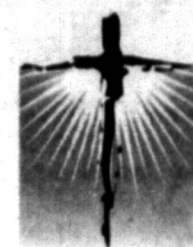
Nevertheless, the original disciples suddenly came to believe so strongly that God had raised Jesus from the dead that they were willing to die for that belief.

We come now to our second concern: What is the best explanation of these four facts? In his book, *Justifying Historical*

Descriptions, historian C.B. McCullagh lists six tests historians use to determine the best explanation for a given body of historical facts. The hypothesis given by the eyewitnesses — "God raised Jesus from the dead" — passes all these tests:

- It has great explanatory scope. It explains why the tomb was found empty, why the disciples saw post-mortem appearances of Jesus, and why the Christian faith came into being.
- It has great explanatory power. It explains why the body of Jesus was gone, why people repeatedly saw Jesus alive despite His earlier public execution, and so forth.
- It is plausible. Given the historical context of Jesus' unparalleled life and claims, the resurrection makes sense as the divine confirmation of those radical claims.
- It is not ad hoc or contrived. It requires only one additional hypothesis: that God exists.
- It is in accord with accepted beliefs. The hypothesis "God raised Jesus from the dead" does not in any way conflict with the accepted belief that people do not rise naturally from the dead. The Christian accepts that belief as wholeheartedly as he accepts the hypothesis that God raised Jesus from the dead.
- It far outstrips any of its rival theories above. Down through history, various alternative explanations of the facts have been offered — the conspiracy theory, the apparent death theory, the hallucination theory, and so forth.

Such hypotheses have been almost universally rejected by contemporary scholarship. No naturalistic hypothesis has, in fact, attracted a great number of scholars. Therefore, the best explanation of the established facts seems to be that God raised Jesus from the dead.



MISSISSIPPI
BAPTISTS

**THE SECOND
FRONT PAGE**

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Asia suffering

NASHVILLE, Tenn. (BP) — Central Asia is suffering through its worst winter in at least 30 years, and Southern Baptists have moved to help isolated villages where people are in danger of starvation. In Afghanistan's Sheberghan district, winters usually are relatively mild and short. This year, however, heavy snows fell for more than a week and temperatures then dropped to minus 11 degrees Fahrenheit for the following week, leaving roads and communities snowbound. The human death toll has risen to 483, and at least 147,000 head of livestock have died. In nearby Tajikistan, winter crops like wheat froze and yielded no produce at all. A total of \$117,636 has been allocated from the Southern Baptist World Hunger Fund to clear roads, purchase flour, powdered milk, rice, beans, oil, blankets, and winter clothing for more than 10,500 families in both countries. Francis Horton, Central and South Asia area director for Baptist Global Response, a Southern Baptist international relief and development organization, asked Christians worldwide to pray for the people in Central Asia whose lives and destinies are in danger. "Pray for people who are struggling with no electricity, rationed water and very little firewood," he said. "Pray that this work will save physical lives. More importantly, pray that God would use these hard times to further His Kingdom, so that the saving of physical lives is not in vain."

Looking back

10 years ago

William A. Hanberry, a retired commercial contractor from Hattiesburg, is elected as the new chairman of the board of trustees at New Orleans Seminary.

20 years ago

Cindy Allred, Hope Hurst, Suzanne Oakley, and Reba Young of First Church, Bruce, receive the Mississippi Acteens Citation. Fewer than 10 young women had previously earned this highest achievement. Charles Nestor is pastor; Lily Oakley is Acteens leader.

50 years ago

Calvary Church, Jackson, observes an Easter open house for its mammoth new education and activities building. James L. Sullivan, executive secretary-treasurer of the Baptist Sunday School Board in Nashville, speaks at the 8:15 and 10:50 morning services.



YOU CAN RESPOND RIGHT NOW!

Simply share the following prayer with God in your own words:

1. Lord, I admit that I need you. *(I have sinned.)*
2. I want forgiveness for my sins and freedom from eternal death. *(I repent.)*
3. I believe Jesus died and rose from the grave to forgive my sins and to restore my relationship with you. *(I believe in Jesus.)*
4. By faith, I invite Jesus Christ into my life. From this time on, I want to live in a loving relationship with Him. *(I receive Christ as my Savior and Lord.)*

"But as many as received him, to them he gave the right to become children of God, even to those who believe in his name." (John 1:12)

If you make a decision for Jesus Christ today, contact a local Baptist church for spiritual guidance.

FOLKS HOT ABOUT GLOBAL WARMING

In March 2008, a group of Southern Baptists took it upon themselves to come out with a Declaration about Global Climate Change entitled, A Southern Baptist Declaration on the Environment and Climate Change. Various reports concerning the Declaration indicated that it was done by Southern Baptist leaders, was a statement by the Southern Baptist Convention, or was a Southern Baptist position on global climate change.

The problem with that is that all of those things are partially true, but even more so they are untrue.

Baptists are free to think and are capable of speaking on any issue or taking any position they would like. On the other hand, they do not speak for all of their fellow Baptists.

The Declaration was not signed by an official group, a Convention, or other gathering of Baptists who said this is what we believe and where we stand. The document was a statement agreed to by a compilation of Baptists who felt like a statement needed to be made about their concern and care for the planet.

With the release of that information I can tell you that while the earth may not be warmer, some of our Baptist friends got hot. There is nothing scientific about my evaluation but I got phone calls, E-mails, and folks stopping me just to ask about this Declaration.

While it was not 100%, I can tell you that the percentage of folks who were deeply concerned to highly upset by the Declaration was just a couple



Directions

Jim Futral, executive director-treasurer
Mississippi Baptist Convention Board

of ticks less than that. For most of you, this disclaimer is not necessary, but for those of you who may not know, I am not a scientist. I do not have temperature gauges located at the North and South Poles and in places in between. I have not been keeping temperature records over the last 50 years. I have tried to listen to the pro-and-con, push-and-shove arguments that have taken place over the last decade.

I might add that I, like many of you, was not involved in the discussion or asked for any insights or understandings; I don't even know anything about the Declaration that was made. I personally do not mind if anybody wants to make a declaration on the environment and climate change. They are free to do so, but they do not need to do it on my behalf or yours without us being a party to the process.

While scores of books have been written and many films have been produced concerning this issue, I certainly do not have the background to begin addressing the pros and cons of global change. However, there are some things that I do know. First and foremost, I think that it is important for those of us who believe the Bible and for those of us who are followers of Christ to recognize that we do have the stewardship of caring for God's creation.

When God made the heavens and the earth and everything therein, He saw it and said it was good. The placing of man in the garden and on the planet came with these simple instructions, "And the Lord God took the man and put him in the Garden of Eden to dress it and to keep it" (Gen. 2:15).

To ignore instructions that come with our being here and the care that we are supposed to give to His creation, is not just an environmental issue — it is spiritual insensitivity.

Additionally, I think that it is important for all parties, whomever they are, to cool down. I'm not talking about the planet being hot or cold; I'm talking about attitudes and temperaments being heated up so that it is less discovery or discussion that is meaningful or helpful.

I watch, listen, read, and try to comprehend the great temperature shifts that have taken place across the centuries.

While there is little doubt that there have been some increases in the temperature on the planet, there is also a reality that this most recent winter is said to be the coldest winter since records have been kept.

I am not at all sure what good the angry, vitriolic language or bitter and barbed attacks add to either the information pool or how it leads to

decisions that will make our physical world a better place.

I am often reminded of the thought-provoking little piece of poetry that says, "When in trouble, when in doubt, run in circles scream and shout." Occasionally, this attitude has dominated global climate issues.

To the best of my ability, I should try to be a good, well-informed, and engaged citizen of the planet. Beyond that, I should seek to do what I can wherever I can to make it better.

One final thought that has been reoccurring in my own heart out of all of the discussion I have seen and read has to do with some folks needing to get heated up.

We need to cool down about some things, but isn't it strange that some things of far greater importance — issues of eternal value — and personal spiritual needs get overlooked?

In all of my decades of being in ministry, I have never one time received a letter, phone call, or E-mail from somebody who was upset because of someone who was lost, separated from God, needed Jesus Christ, and was facing a Godless eternity in hell.

For me personally, if we are going to engage in rage and if there is going to be an issue that is going to dominate the landscape, it ought to be the wonder of God's grace and love in Jesus Christ who alone provides abundant life now and life everlasting.

If our passions are going to be inflamed, may it be over people who are separated from God by sin and over the enormity of God's love that can save and transform every man and woman, boy or girl forever.

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Outreach to Roma people yielding evangelistic results

BUZAU, Romania (BP) — Forfeiting a starting position on a professional soccer team didn't make sense to the parents of Mihail Stoica, a talented young Roma Gypsy believer from the mountains near Buzau, Romania.

For the Roma — an ostracized, poverty-stricken people group dispersed throughout the world — Stoica's chance to rise above his status was a rare opportunity too good to pass up. Yet, the influence of the professional sports lifestyle came at too great a cost to stay in the game.

"I was playing soccer, my personal idol," Stoica said. "I didn't think it was a sin to play soccer, but then I realized the price that came with that. So I left playing soccer and just followed Jesus Christ."

In the summer of 2006, Stoica obeyed God by joining eight other young believers from across Romania to travel to a foreign city to tell others about Jesus Christ. These growing disciples are the result of the International Mission Board's most developed work with the Roma.

The result of Roma reaching Roma is a key hope for other Gypsy work that spans throughout Europe, Northern Africa and the Middle East and, more recently, into South America.

Roma diasporas

The Roma people made their way to Europe in the 14th century after being evicted from their native India. As early as the 1500s, many were removed from parts of Europe and relocated to South America. Others traveled into parts of Northern Africa and the Middle East by force or by choice.

Through these staggered diasporas, the Roma have put down roots among people who despise them not only for their dark skin, but also for their poverty, illiteracy, and poor living conditions.

Wherever their travels take them, Gypsies tend to adopt the local language and beliefs while still maintaining their own. The Romani language, strong family relationships and lifestyle characteristics unite the 10 million-plus Roma worldwide.

Best known for their wagons, fortune telling, colorful clothing, and parties, the Roma are a proud, passionate people who fight against the loss of their culture and family circles.

International Mission Board (IMB) workers and national partners reach out through literacy education, teaching job skills and using Bible storying to evangelize and disciple new Roma believers.

Today, although this scattered people group may vary in dialect or location, IMB workers are able to minister along family and cultural lines to bring the Roma to Christ and train them to reach their own people — to have their own leaders and missionaries.

"When the Roma begin to do their own evangelism, they begin to cross barriers so quickly," said Jim Whitley, an IMB worker who recently transferred from Romania to work among the Gypsies in South America. "A real indigenous church-planting movement. ... [T]hat's the ultimate goal."

Ministry's beginnings

It wasn't the easiest way for a new missionary to begin ministry.

During Bible study in a Roma Gypsy home not long after Whitley went to post-communist Romania, police knocked at the door. The careful plotting of an Orthodox priest brought the officers to escort Whitley and another missionary from the community. All appeals to the mayor, who had approved the meeting, proved futile.

Persecution set in as Whitley and his wife Charlotte began their work in Romania nearly 10 years ago. Their work engaging Roma Gypsies in the Eastern European country blazed trails into unknown territory.

Today, work with Gypsies in Romania flourishes and other missionaries have fanned out across Europe to join efforts to reach the Roma. The Romanian work has expanded to more than 50 Bible studies, at least 10 new churches and 10-20 baptisms a year. But now the work there continues without these pioneer missionaries.

The Whitleys recently moved to South America to begin new work among Brazilian Gypsies, but it wasn't an easy decision.

"We were comfortable [in Romania] and the work is not finished," Whitley said, "but we felt God was moving us [to Campinas, Brazil] to work with the same people group."

On to South America

Although they didn't intend to leave Romania, a request for new work among South American Roma touched the Whitleys. "As we went looking through neighborhoods, we found they still love to have their big barbecues outside and dancing," Whitley said of the similarity between Brazilian Roma and their



GATHERING TOGETHER — Roma believers gather for Bible study under a circus-like tent in a small Gypsy community near Braila, Romania. Language and lifestyle unite the more than 40 million Roma worldwide. The International Mission Board of the Southern Baptist Convention is making a push into Roma communities around the world that do not know Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior. (Photo courtesy of International Mission Board)

European cousins. "They just enjoy life. In a lot of ways, they are very similar."

There are differences. Brazilian Roma are not persecuted, although they are ostracized and held at a distance. They thrive as businessmen, metal workers and fortunetellers — true entrepreneurs by nature.

The number of Gypsies in Brazil is in dispute since many have no birth certificate. Estimates range from 350,000 to 650,000, with groups living in other South American countries such as Argentina and Chile.

Regardless of the number, the Whitleys are deep into language study and seeking information about the location and cultural benchmarks of this people group — particularly the characteristics that will impact how they should share the Gospel.

"The Roma community is generally open to talk to you about God," Whitley said. "No strong religious ties keep them from becoming evangelical. Most [ties] depend on how strong the family is with the Catholic Church. They could get kicked out of their house for that kind of thing."

The Whitleys anticipate using Bible storying as a primary way of sharing the Gospel with predominantly non-literate Roma. They also plan to prayerwalk through Roma communities, looking for persons of peace as entryways into villages and starting work with Brazilian believers to evangelize and disciple them. They hope to start Bible studies in each village, ultimately forming Roma Baptist churches with their own leaders.

Then, the Whitleys pray, missionaries from the new churches will begin to cross social barriers with other Gypsies to win more of their own people to Christ.

'Why so long?'

"Why did you wait so long to come?" Saidi (not her real name) asked through tears. A Gypsy in one of the countries of Northern Africa and the Middle East, Saidi said, "My father is already dead and in hell because no one came to tell us about Christ. Even

today, there are going to be people [who] die and go to hell."

Gary Shelton (not his real name), a worker committed to Gypsies in the region, wrestled with answering the first known believer among Saidi's people group. To say he was waiting for better evangelism methods or language skills would not work. In the end, Shelton had to say it was his fault and the fault of every other Christian who did not give up everything and follow Jesus.

"Ever since that time, I've given up lots of activities I used to spend my time doing," Shelton said. "We rearranged our time, our schedule, for sowing the Gospel. When I sat down with Saidi that day and he shared his burden for his people, God said to me, 'That's how I feel about it. That's how I want you to feel about it.'"

When Shelton moved his family to work among the Gypsies in the region a few years ago, their commitment was an answer to the prayers of five churches in the United States that were petitioning God to send laborers to the field. Approximately one million of these cousins to the European Roma Gypsies live in Northern Africa and the Middle East, although to most people there, they are considered invisible.

Romas as outsiders

Since their migration from India, this group of Gypsies has accepted the local Arabic language, making it harder to identify them among the people, yet easier for Christian workers to communicate with them. Even with the assimilated language and nominal adherence to Islam, they see themselves on the fringes of society. It's a stigma that gives them a bond with foreigners.

"I've found out sometimes that outsiders trust outsiders," Shelton said. "Gypsies most of the time feel like they're outsiders, like they don't belong. They're pretty trusting of me."

Being the first foreigner many Gypsies in the region have seen has opened doors for Shelton in some of the transient Gypsy tent camps.

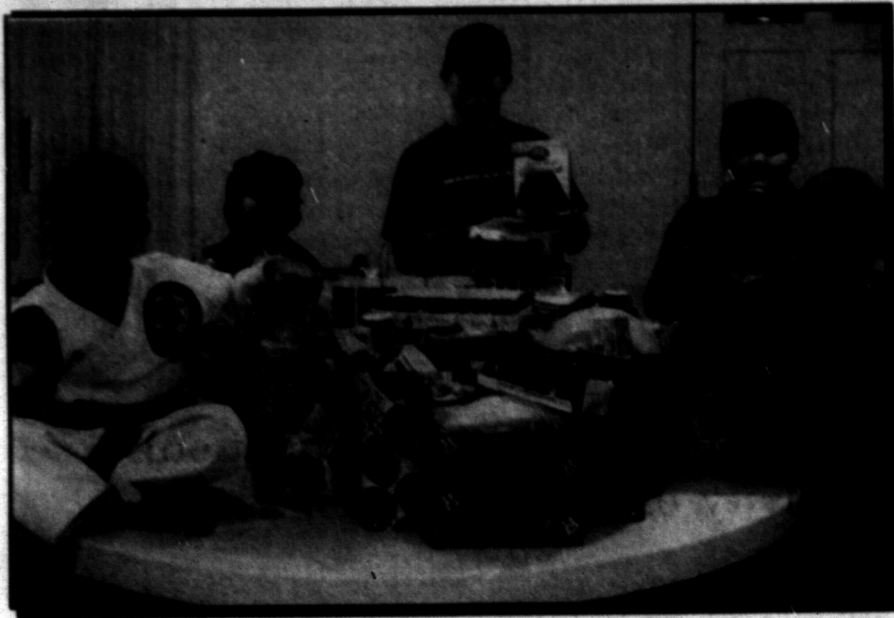


LEARNING TO PRAY — A young Roma girl clasps her hands in prayer during a youth Bible study in Lakul Dulce (Sweet Lake), a Gypsy village in Romania. The International Mission Board of the Southern Baptist Convention is teaching Romas around the world to reach out to their brothers and sisters with the Gospel message. (Photo courtesy of the International Mission Board)

JUST FOR THE RECORD



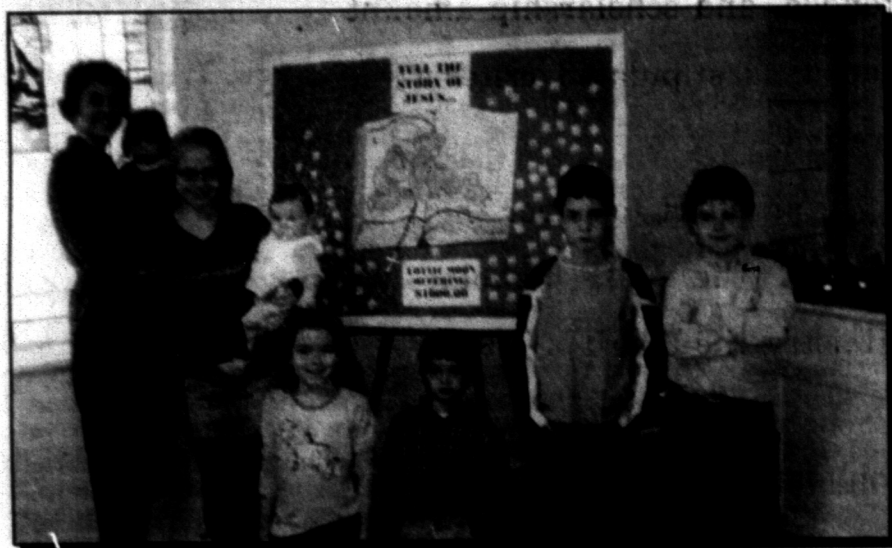
MISSISSIPPI BAPTISTS



1. Branch Church, Morton, RAs



5. Bethsaida Church, Philadelphia, GAs



6. Rock Hill Church, Mt. Olive, children



8. RAs and GAs, Rolling Creek Church

1. The RAs of Branch Church, Morton, made birthday kits and delivered them to the Crisis Center in Forest. The bags were part of a mission project for world hunger emphasis. Shown are the participants.

2. Fair River Church, Brookhaven, is hosting a men and boys rally Mar. 31, 7 p.m., with Malcolm Taylor, 12 time All-American defensive tackle as speaker.

3. Vaiden Church, Vaiden, is hosting the Bibletones in concert Mar. 30, 11 a.m. For more information, call (662) 464-5275.

4. West Laurel Church, Laurel, will host Jerry Rankin, president, IMB, Apr. 13, 11 a.m.

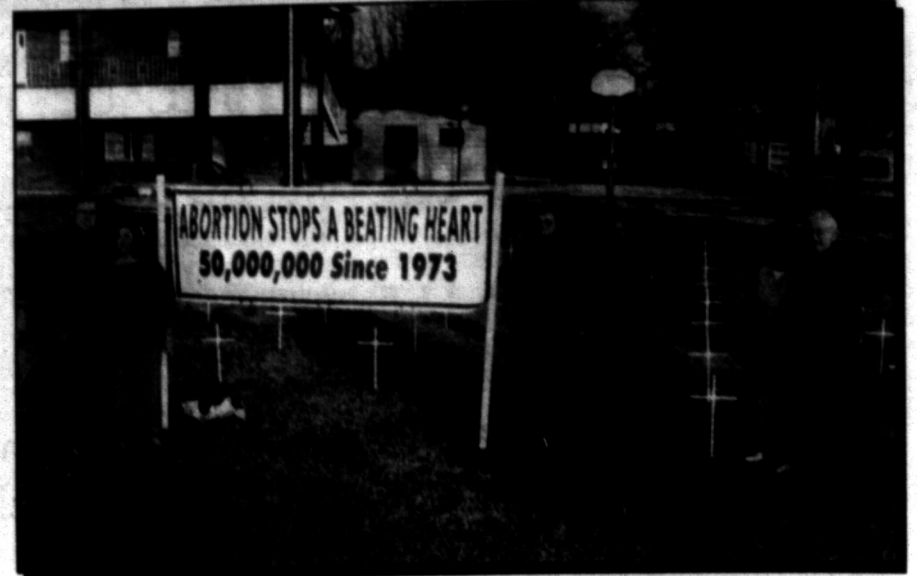
5. Bethsaida Church, Philadelphia, hosted a craft fair Mar. 8 to raise funds for the Annie Armstrong Easter Offering, with the GAs selling crafts made by them during the year and raising more than \$700 toward the offering. Shown are the participants.

6. Rock Hill Church, Mt. Olive, exceeded its Lottie Moon Christmas Offering goal of \$1,000 by collecting \$1,363 during the Bibles for Lottie emphasis. Shown are some of the children who participated along with special guest Ellen Cone, missionary to Canada.

7. The adult choir of Sylvarena Church, Wesson, will present the Easter musical and drama End of the Beginning Mar. 30, 6 p.m.

8. The RAs and GAs of Rolling Creek Church, Clarke County, presented Love's Kitchen in Meridian with a monetary gift for their vegetable garden supplies, and also cleaned windows, during their Feb. 16 children's ministry day. Shown are the participants.

9. Lyon Church, Lyon, observed the 50/50/50 Campaign, by displaying 50 crosses on the church lawn representing the 50 million babies aborted since the Roe v. Wade decision of 1973.



9. Lyon Church, Lyon



11. Mt. Zion GAs and ladies



14. Bethel Church wMu

10. Highland Church, Adams Association, exceeded their Lottie Moon Christmas Offering goal of \$6700 by collecting \$7065.

11. The 1st, 2nd, and 5th grade GAs of Mt. Zion Church, Columbus, gave a Valentine tea for the older ladies' Sunday School class Feb. 13. Shown are the participants.

12. New Hope Church, Foxworth, will host New Wine in concert Mar. 30, 6:30 p.m.

13. Pine Hill Church, Enterprise, will host a youth praise service Mar. 29, 7 p.m., featuring Allison Carroll, Barry Duell, Jeremy Street, and Bryan Williams, followed by a pizza fellowship.

14. The wMu of Bethel Church, Bogue Chitto, met Mar. 15 to make Easter baskets for the ladies at Silver Cross Nursing Home. Shown are the participants.

5. Mt. Olive Church, Okolona, will have a 5th Sunday singing Mar. 30, 5 p.m., followed by a fellowship time and finger food. Call (662) 447-2757 or 263-4994 for information.



THE MISSISSIPPI BAPTIST FOUNDATION

Spring 2008

Scholarship (*sköl'ər-shīp*) *n.* – 1. a grant-in-aid to a student (as by a college or foundation);
2. the character, qualities, activity, or attainments of a scholar.

Recently, while making a presentation to donors and other friends of Blue Mountain College, one individual exclaimed, "I didn't know the Foundation had a scholarship ministry!" In the past 3-1/2 years that I have served as the Executive Director of the Mississippi Baptist Foundation, I have encountered numerous folks who are not fully aware of the role

and goal of the Foundation ministry in general and our scholarship ministry in particular. Therefore, the purpose of this newsletter is to increase awareness of the MBF Scholarship Ministry, to highlight various aspects of this ministry, to recognize our 2007-08 scholarship recipients, and to offer helpful tips for establishing and administering a scholarship ministry in the local church.

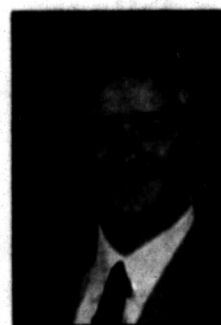
The MBF Scholarship Ministry

The apostle Paul expressed confidence in his Lord when he declared, "And my God shall supply all your needs according to His riches in glory in Christ Jesus" (Philippians 4:19). This well-known verse highlights the focus of the Mississippi Baptist Foundation's Scholarship Ministry.

Due to the generosity of many faithful Christian stewards, the Foundation has the privilege of providing needs-based supplemental financial assistance to Mississippi students who are pursuing a degree at a Mississippi Baptist college or a Southern Baptist seminary. Most of these endowed scholarship accounts offer specific eligibility guidelines for awarding a schol-

arship grant. Factors such as field of study, institution attended, and scholarship amount often are included as stipulated criteria for award consideration.

In an effort to honor the purpose of the MBF Scholarship Ministry, the Board of Trustees of the Mississippi Baptist Foundation has set forth additional guidelines that are applicable to all scholarship awards. An online application and our scholarship policies may be reviewed at www.ms baptist foundation.org.



Daniel Hall
Executive Director
Mississippi Baptist Foundation

Ella Mae Pitts McCord Trust



ELLA MAE
PITTS MCCORD

For many people, books are held in the highest regard as they represent someone's creative handiwork, offer knowledge, provide enjoyment, and afford opportunities for sharing. All of us have known people through the years who receive great joy by sharing their love for books and learning with others while witnessing the windows of knowledge and

opportunity that are opened through the educational process.

Carolyn Mounce was and is one of those special people who spent a career opening windows of opportunity and enhancing the educational experience of students. After graduating from Blue Mountain in 1960, Carolyn served as librarian at the college from 1960 until her retirement in 2004. In this capacity, Carolyn diligently sought to minister to thousands of students as they pursued their academic and vocational goals. In an effort to

honor servants such as Carolyn, perhaps a bumper sticker should be printed that reads "Have you hugged your librarian today?"

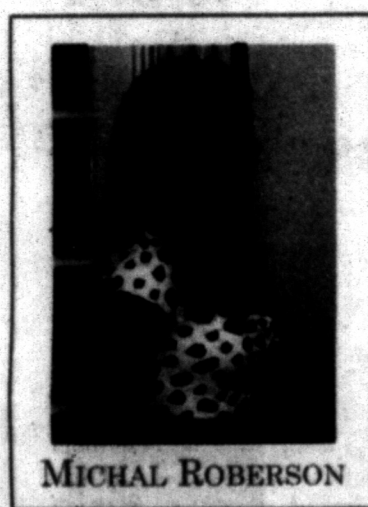
About a year ago, Carolyn contacted the Foundation office with some questions about establishing an endowment with the MBF. From that contact and subsequent visits, Carolyn established the "Ella Mae Pitts McCord Trust" in memory of her aunt. The earnings from this fund will provide scholarships to female students attending Blue Mountain College.

The Mississippi Baptist Foundation is grateful for the opportunity to come alongside of Carolyn and Blue Mountain College as "laborers together with God."



CAROLYN MOUNCE

Students Grateful for MBF Scholarships



MICHAL ROBERSON

Michal Roberson, a sophomore at Blue Mountain College, is one of many female students who benefit from the Ella Mae Pitts McCord Trust. "The foundation scholarship means so much to me and my family because it is enabling me to attend a college

which strengthens my spiritual walk with Christ, sense of responsibility, and character."

Michal is seeking a double-major in English and Biblical studies. After graduation, she plans to spend time on the mission field and to be involved in Christian publishing.



TIMOTHY BASS

Timothy Bass is another scholarship recipient who attends Blue Mountain College. "I am a full time pastor, full time husband and full time father. Without the scholarships that I receive from the Mississippi Baptist Foundation it would be difficult to further my educa-

tion in the calling to which God has called me. I am very grateful for the opportunity that has been given me."

Timothy is majoring in Church Related Vocations, and is currently the pastor of Tiplersville Baptist Church in the Benton-Tippah Association.

2007-2008 Scholarship Recipients

Blue Mountain College

Ryan Baker Myrtle
Timothy Daniel Bass Tiptonville
Jennifer Best Blue Mountain
Billy Blackmon Columbus
Samantha Chism Ecu
Charles Keith Cisco Lamar
Amie Elizabeth Clark Olive Branch
Aaron Clay Olive Branch
Chelsey Maria Culver Ripley
Stephen Ford Greenwood Springs
Daniel Paul Harkins Leland
Jamie Diane Harrison Belmont
Robert David Haynes Booneville
Jonathan Hobson Indianola
Jason Howell Myrtle
Ryan Andrew Howell Booneville
Nicholas Hughes Blue Mountain
David Brian Jones Carthage
Amber Keltz Tupelo
Matthew Wayne King Water Valley
Andrew Ledbetter Tupelo
Thomas Magers, II Nettleton
Barry Matthews Algoma
Crystal Sue McAlexander Holly Springs
Wesley McCain Plantersville
Carissa Joy McElyea Walnut
Emily Caroline Miller Pontotoc
Lydia Morton Thaxton
Jack Daniel Napier Blue Mountain
Emily Newell Pontotoc
Kayla Otts Ripley
Brooke Phillips Corinth
Kimberley Dawn Phillips Blue Mountain
Daniel Lynn Pitts Blue Mountain
Blake Richardson Etta
Michael Kristin Roberson Coldwater
Elizabeth Anne Roby Belden
Lacasey L. Russell Shannon
Nathan Russell Eupora
Heather Scott Etta
Elizabeth Short Ecu
David T. Singleton Saltillo
Bonnie Christina Teel Red Banks
Kimberly Renay Tutor Vardaman
Taryn Wenzel Long Beach

Mississippi College

Zachary Adams Stringer
William (Jeff) Armstrong Vicksburg
Eric Shane Atkins Purvis
Laurie Babb Madison
Mamye (Liza) Ball Utica
Anna K. Beasley Crystal Springs
Erika Paige Bingham Kilmichael
Anna Ray Bird Jackson
Ann-Carter Bloomfield Vancleave
Ashlynn Bloomfield Vancleave
Emily Boutwell Laurel
David Boyd Collinsville
Andrea Burrows Mantachie
Kelsey M. Cade Macon
Victoria Card Oxford
Katie Chancellor Terry
Patrick Chandler Southaven
Audrie Cirlot Moss Point
Elizabeth Anne Clark Hattiesburg
Jeffrey Hunter Clark Hattiesburg
Christa Ann Clarkson Holly Springs
Cynthia Deann Cleveland Union
Annisha Collins Jackson
Mallory Lynn Conner Oxford
Brittany Prather Raymond
Amber L. Coots Clinton
Jacob Russell Crouch Toomsaba
Reese Daniels Monticello
Cameron James Davidson Columbus
Charles Sherman Davis Oxford

James (Jay) Davis Madison
Victoria Deere Summit
Roger Austin Dillard Saltillo
Whitney Caroline Dodd Picayune
Mark A. Dragon, Jr. Picayune
Tyler Edwards Madison
Bethany Ellis Courtland
Lesley Ford Vicksburg
Jeremy Shawn Fortenberry Carthage
Lauren Brynn Fortenberry Oxford
Camille Garrett Clinton
Chauncey Garrett Clinton
Melanie E. Gladney Madison
Elizabeth B. Golding Winona
Rebecca Marie Goysich Tupelo
Laura Graves Leland
Thomas J. Gray Columbia
Daniel Griffin Meadville
Kyle Hancock Macon
Laura Allison Hankins Clinton
Sarah Hankins Clinton
Nicole Harrell Forest
Andrew Hicks Clinton
Corey Hicks Jackson
James Andrew Hollingsworth Fulton
Charlie House Drew
Rachel Hudson Oxford
Lindsey Rea Hunt Pearl
Laura Jo Hurt Natchez
Joseph Ivey Vicksburg
Reagan Erin Jackson Philadelphia
Audra Yvonne Johnson Holcomb
Emily Elizabeth Jones Brandon
Sara Elizabeth Jones Brandon
Christopher Lee Krayzkowski CantonM
Amber Lasource Madison
Brooke Lincoln Jackson
Myles J. Lofland Madison
Trent Marchman Madison
Sarah D. Marler Carthage
Lauren Carol McGee Crystal Springs
Matthew Meece Long Beach
Robin Milner Tinsley
Christina Alicia Mullin Oxford
Brian Murphy Columbus
Laura Murphy Columbus
Joshua Allen Neely Harrisville
Courtney O'Dell Centerville
David Ostrander Indianola
William Cody Pannell Pontotoc
Gillian Patrick Brandon
Heather Danielle Peavy Brandon
Christopher Penton Gautier
Sarah Pigford Moss Point
Jason B. Pounds Brandon
Wes Prather Raymond
Brian Prewitt Jackson
Lana Patrice Queen Raymond
Christopher Ray Sumrall
Jerrold Mitchell Rayborn Brookhaven
April Rayner Pearl
Emily Bess Rich Prentiss
Heather Richards Brandon
Samantha Roberts Laurel
Zachary A. Sanders Star
Stuardt Saxton Canton
Bryan M. Sheffield Picayune
Chad Everett Shelley Georgetown
Amy Simpson Kosciusko
Whitney Smith Carriere
Erika Stanford Moss Point
Hamilton F. Stevens Benton
Gloria Kadiana Stewart Hattiesburg
Kaleb Lee Thompson Purvis
Emily Tillman Philadelphia
Lane Alexander Vance Grenada
Jonathan Kaleb Van Landingham Hazlehurst
Jordan Renee Warren Madison
Jeremy White Vicksburg
Justin White Vicksburg
Damon Williamson Monticello

Kyle Wilson Palm Bay, FL
Aston Woodward Madison
Anna Hays Tutwiler
Joel Hays Tutwiler
Bradley Mann Boyle
Evan Mumbower Clinton



William Carey University

Joseph Daniel Bird Brandon
Kristen Williamson Bishop Brookhaven
John Blackledge Sandersville
Lesley RaeAnn Blackwell Ellisville
Cory Cotton Laurel
Lauren Ellzey Hattiesburg
Chineme Enyioha Hattiesburg
Laura Denise Evans Petal
Samuel N. Gillie Brooklyn
Justin Ryan Grice Hattiesburg
Matthew Benton Henley Florence
Jeffrey A. Hollingsworth Petal
Dan Ivey Vicksburg
Shelby Lawson Ludlow
Lauren Massengale Petal
Jerrold Don McCabe McComb
Daniel Trent Odom Waynesboro
Lindsey Allen Stoyall Brandon
Kimberly Ann Smith Waller Poplarville
Ashley Webb Holly Springs
Kimberly Webb Holly Springs
Lisa Wicker Tylertown
Cari Williamson Hattiesburg

New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary

Jill Albritton Bogue Chitto
Jason Allen Brandon
Kenneth Armstrong Calhoun City
Amanda Aslam Philadelphia
Jonathan Bailey Long Beach
Eric Ballard Columbus
Patrick Barnes Oakvale
James Barnett Biloxi
Eric Bean Petal
James Belcher Starkville
Dave Best Amory
Matthew Bishop Brookhaven
Joshua Braddy Brandon
James Bradford Waynesboro
Joel Brister Bogue Chitto
Jason Britt Brookhaven
Larry Bryant New Albany
Jared Busby Rienzi
Andrew Carroll Richland
Ronald Cook Magee
Kasia Crider Monticello
Ricky Cummings Hattiesburg
Michael Doss Gulfport
Timothy Freeny Jackson
Chris Gaskin West Point
Matthew Gazaway Amory
Jacob Gaasz Gore Springs
Jason Hathorn Ellisville
Kendra Hinson Natchez
Anna Inmon Amory
James Jackson Olive Branch
Jennifer Jefcoat Saltillo
Richard Johnson Crystal Springs
Janna Johnston Batesville
Ana Keith Clinton
Victor Keyes Morton
Joseph Kuykendall Meridian
Brandi Lambert Silver Creek
Timothy Lawrence Jayess
Brian Lees Woodville
Elizabeth McGraw Woodville
Mauricka McKenzie Jackson

James McMillen New Albany
Joel Medina Carthage
Blanca Montero Bolivia
Jonathan Moyers Iuka
Marshall Pace Picayune
Timothy Peabody Clinton
Stephanie Powell Purvis
Marsha Price Baldwin
Robert Rikard Duck Hill
Ken Robey Taylorsville
Devin Rost Amory
Angelia Routzahn Laurel
Dori Rushing Magnolia
Johnnie Rushing Magnolia
Richard Scoggins McComb
Paul South Biloxi
Jessica Stanford Coldwater
Dustin Stewart Crystal Springs
John Tedder Grenada
Ken Tew Meridian
Kristin Tew Forest
Ashton Thompson Brandon
Daria Walker Brookhaven
Richard Warren Brookhaven
William Weeks Southaven
Jason Westmoreland Shivers
Michael Wilbanks Winona
William Williamson Greenwood
Joey Wolfe Vicksburg
Joshua Wright Purvis
Kenneth Wright Batesville
Lois Zinc Bay St. Louis

Southern Baptist Theological Seminary

Jonathan Berry Crystal Springs
James A. Donahou Starkville
Jon Derek Fortenberry Oxford
William H. "Opie" Hurst Tupelo
Jonathan Eric Kitchens Petal
Jason Kiam Louisville
Angela Lewis Tupelo
Jeff Nelmeyer, Jr. Oxford
Brandon A. Powell Batesville
Victor Robinson Southaven
Charles Smith, Jr. Clinton

Southeastern Baptist Theological Seminary

Karmen K. Hutchins Smith Edwards
Casey W. Powell Columbus
Stephen A. Roberts Guntown

Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary

Jonathan Baker Ripley
Daniel Teasler Senatobia
Michael Edwards Flora
Charles Feathers Slayden
Jerry Caston Crystal Springs
Steven Mangum Moselle
David Fedele Brandon
Amanda Cowart Laurel
Mark Isbell New Albany
Remey Graham Ridgeland
Melinda Loyd Senatobia
Sarah Fedele Brandon
Joshua Loyd Nesbit
Ethan Jones Lamar
Laura Parrish Greenville
Jonathan Coleman Clinton

Church & Association Scholarship Ministry

Periodically, Foundation staff receive inquiries from churches and associations that are exploring the possibility of establishing their own scholarship ministry. The following questions and suggestions are offered to assist churches and associations interested in this unique ministry opportunity.

- Will the church have an application process?
- Who will be eligible to apply for and receive a scholarship from the scholarship ministry? (Only graduating high school seniors?; Only members of the church, etc.? Students from the local Baptist Association?) The church may want to consider writing the eligibility requirements in broad sweeps by prioritizing the church's preferences. For instance, while the church may desire to make a scholarship award to a church member, members of another Southern Baptist church in the association might be considered if the awarding church has no students eligible in a given year.
- Will the scholarship be renewable?
- Will a church Scholarship Committee be established to process applications and make awards from the fund? This approach will help maintain the integrity of the ministry.
- Will recommendations be accepted from church members? Remember, the donor should not be allowed to dictate who receives an award. If a donor wants to advance a specific individual's education, then the donor probably should offer assistance to the student in a different manner than the church's Scholarship Fund.
- Will the scholarships be awarded only to students attending a Mississippi Baptist College and/or one of the six Southern Baptist seminaries?
- Will a certain grade point average be required?
- Will candidates for an award be expected to declare a certain major or course of study? The church may want to consider keeping the stipulations as broad as possible in order to increase the opportunities for accomplishing the goal of awarding scholarships.
- Will the scholarship be a budgeted item, an endowed fund from which the earnings will be awarded, or will awards be distributed as gifts are received?

MISSISSIPPI BAPTIST FOUNDATION SCHOLARSHIP MINISTRY

It's that time of year.

SCHOLARSHIP APPLICATIONS
FOR THE 2008-2009 ACADEMIC
YEAR ARE AVAILABLE ON OUR
WEBSITE.

VISIT
www.ms baptist foundation.org
TO COMPLETE YOUR APPLICATION



The Mississippi Baptist Foundation's Scholarship Ministry provides needs-based supplemental financial assistance to Mississippi students who are pursuing a degree at a Mississippi Baptist college or a Southern Baptist seminary. For more information about the MBF Scholarship Ministry, please visit our website, www.ms baptist foundation.org. Scholarship applications for the 2008-2009 academic year will be available on our website beginning January 1, 2008. Completed applications must be received in the MBF office by April 30.

Please receive these ideas as "food for thought" as your church strives to offer scholarship assistance to students. Your friends at the Mississippi Baptist Foundation can assist with the investment and administration of your church's scholarship funds. Please call our office at 601-292-3210 with questions regarding the Foundation's Scholarship Ministry and/or for assistance with the scholarship ministry of your church or Baptist Association.

STAFF CHANGES

1. Jeff L. Ingram has become the new adult ministry strategist for the Louisiana Baptist Convention. Ingram comes from First Church, Brandon, where he was the minister of adults and ministries since 2000.
2. Jay Cook has been called as pastor of First Church, Pascagoula, effective Mar. 2. He and his wife Kristi are pictured with their children Jameson and Amelia Rose. He comes from Magnolia Church, Laurel.
3. Wesson Church, Wesson, has called Ronny Robinson as pastor effective Feb. 17. He comes with his wife, Gay.
4. Mt. Horeb Church, Meridian, has called Thomas Belcher as pastor. He and his family come from Milport Church, Milport, Ala.



1. Jeff Ingram

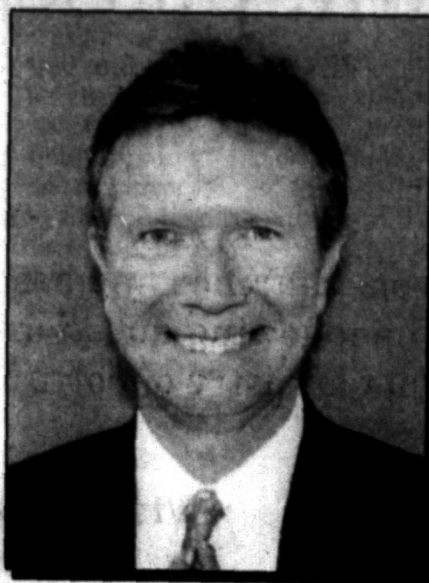


2. Cook and family



3. The Robinsons

COLLEGE NEWS



Mike Staten

New Albany banker Mike Staten has been elected chair of the board of trustees for Blue Mountain College. Staten, senior vice president for BNA Bank, succeeds Ripley businessman Harold Wayne Hankins as head of the board that governs the 135-year-old Christian liberal arts college.

For the first time in more than 100 years, William Carey University will host its Homecoming in April on the 11th and 12th on the Hattiesburg campus. The theme of the 2008 Homecoming is "For Such a Time as This" and many new activities have been planned including a carnival.

Participants are encouraged to register for the various events early by calling (601) 318-6561. For those who do not, registration will begin April 11 from 10:30 a.m. until 5:30 p.m. in the Donna Duck Wheeler Alumni House. For more information call the Alumni Office at the above number.

Mississippi College is close to reaching its goal of raising \$200,000 for a spring scholarship banquet attracting former U.S. Senate Majority Leader Bob Dole as the keynote speaker. New reports show MC supporters have contributed more than \$175,000 as the March 31 event approaches. One donation of \$50,000 and three donations of \$25,000 each top the list for the 6 p.m. program to welcome Dole to the Clinton campus. The V.I.P. reception for Dole and banquet to follow is a key component of MC's \$65 million "Growing the Vision" campaign to enhance scholarships, academic programs and building projects.

Mississippi College leaders are welcoming high school and community college students, family members and friends to Spring Preview Day. The event Saturday March 29 gives visitors the chance to attend classes, eat lunch and become more familiar with the Clinton campus. For more information, contact the Mississippi College Office of Enrollment Services at (601) 925-3800 or (800) 738-1236 or go to the university's web site at www.mc.edu and look under admissions.

Mississippi College President Lee Royce is a new board member of the executive board of the Consortium for Global Education. The Consortium for Global Education "is a premier group that creates and expands educational programs around the world," Royce said.

Lt. Gov. Phil Bryant and U.S. Sen. Roger Wicker will deliver commencement speeches to Mississippi College's Class of 2008 at separate events May 9, 7:30 p.m., and May 10, 10:30 a.m., respectively.

OBITUARIES

Ronnie Gene Jones, 64, passed away Mar. 14 in Decatur, Ala. He pastored churches in Alabama and Mississippi for 49 years. He is survived by his wife, Pat; son, Anthony G. Jones; mother, Margaret Jones; sister, Sheree Jones; five grandchildren; one great-grandchild, three nieces; and one nephew. He was interred in Roselawn Cemetery, Decatur, Ala.

Lowry Anderson, pastor of Bel Aire Church, Gulfport, passed away Mar. 14. Born in Meridian, he was married to the former Kandi Doshier of Harlingen, Tex., and had three children: Melanie Jasper, Zachary Anderson, and Kasie Ulmer. He attended the Mississippi Gulf Coast Junior college and the University of Southern Mississippi. He came to Bel Aire Church from Michael Memorial Church in Gulfport where he had served as worship leader/administrator. Prior to surrendering to the ministry in October, 2002, he spent 27 years as a successful businessman in the lumber business.



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IMMANUEL BAPTIST CHURCH, VICKSBURG, Miss., seeking individual for full-time minister of music/education. Please send resume to Immanuel Baptist Church, attn: personnel committee, 6949 Hwy 61 South, Vicksburg, MS 39180. Or email to IBC_personnel@yahoo.com or contact Michael Bull at (601) 218-5325.

FBC OLOH, IS CURRENTLY accepting resumes for full-time pastor. Please submit resumes to FBC, Oloh, attn: pastor search committee, 36 Oloh Church Road., Sumrall, MS 39482.

CENTRAL BAPTIST CHURCH, Brookhaven, Miss., is currently accepting resumes for a full-time minister of music/outreach. Please send resumes to 749 North Jackson Street, Brookhaven, MS 39601 or email to questions@cbcbrookhaven.org.

FBC, ROLLING FORK, MISS., is seeking a full-time or part-time minister of music. Position includes salary and house. Youth experience would also be helpful but not necessary. Please send resumes to Andy Anderson, FBC, Rolling Fork, 73 North Second Street, Rolling Fork, MS 39159.

FBC OLOH, IS CURRENTLY accepting resumes for full-time minister of music/youth. Please submit resumes to FBC Oloh, attn: music search committee, 36 Oloh Church

Road, Sumrall, MS 39482.

SEEKING PART-TIME MINISTER OF students. Those interested in this position or the interim position should contact Pineview Baptist Church, Clinton, MS. Phone (601) 924-7677. Fax resumes to (601) 924-8378. Or email pineview-bc@bellsouth.net.

NORTH MCCOMB BAPTIST CHURCH is seeking an interim or permanent part-time youth pastor. Send resume to 504 Laurel Street, McComb, MS 39648 or contact the church office at (601) 684-5214.

FAIRFIELD BAPTIST CHURCH, Moselle, Miss., is seeking a full-time pastor. Please send resume with references to Fairfield Baptist Church, c/o Ramsey Coutta, 942 Moselle-Seminary Rd., Moselle, MS 39459.

HARRISBURG BAPTIST CHURCH, Tupelo, Miss., is now receiving resumes for the staff position of director of preschool ministries. Please send resumes to 4675 Cliff Gookin Blvd., Tupelo, MS 38801. Or email to sgordon@harrisburgonline.org.

TUSCOLA BAPTIST CHURCH, Leake association, seeks a part-time worker for children/youth on the 2nd & 4th weekends of each month. Please submit resumes to youth committee, 554 Hwy 487, Lena, MS 39094. Or call 601-267-8509 for more information.

ROBINHOOD BAPTIST CHURCH, Brandon, Miss., is seeking a bi-vocational minister of music. Please contact Rev. Sam Taylor at 601-946-8047 or Taylorviolin@cs.com.

Bibliocipher

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UYWRBYQ WP RBYQY
PFAGFRWU WU FUT
DRBYQ; ODQ RBYQY WP
UDUY DRBYQ UFHY KULYQ
BYFGYU CWGYU FHDUC
HYU, EBYQYMT EY HKPR MY
P F G Y L
FJRP ODKQ: REYAGY

CLUE: J=C

Have fun with cryptography and exercise your Bible knowledge. A King James Version Bible verse has been encoded by letter substitution. The same letter is substituted throughout the puzzle. Solve by trial and error. Answer to last week's puzzle: Romans Twelve Two.

Senate comm. passes Down's babies bill

WASHINGTON (BP) — A Senate committee has passed legislation that could serve to reduce the killing of unborn children diagnosed with Down syndrome or other conditions.

The Senate Health, Education, Labor and Pensions Committee approved the Prenatally and Postnatally Diagnosed Conditions Awareness Act, S. 1810, by unanimous consent in late February.

The measure seeks to address the lack of information and support reportedly given to parents whose unborn children are diagnosed with conditions such as Down syndrome.

It has been estimated about 90% of American children diagnosed in the womb with Down syndrome are aborted. A similar abortion percentage exists for unborn babies diagnosed with spina bifida, cystic fibrosis and dwarfism, according to the bill's sponsor, Sen. Sam Brownback, R-Kan.

"The effect of our abortion policy at this moment is that we are in the midst of a genocide of children with Down syndrome, cerebral palsy and other in utero genetic conditions that medical analysis can detect," Brownback said in a commentary published in The Wichita Eagle in July, when he introduced the bill. "If we think there's a chance the child may have a disability, too often he or she is killed in the womb, and the system seems to push it."

The bill would require that parents whose children receive a diagnosis of Down syndrome or another impairment be provided with the latest information on the condition and be informed of support services available. This would apply to a diagnosis on a child before birth or until a year after birth. The measure also would establish a registry of families willing to adopt special needs children.

"It is difficult, sometimes

overwhelming, for expecting parents to receive news that their unborn child may be born with a disability," Brownback said in a written release after the committee's action. "This legislation will help parents receiving such news by supplying them with current and reliable information about the many options available for caring for children with disabilities."

The American College of Obstetricians and Gynecologists

(ACOG) made a controversial recommendation in January 2007, recommending that all pregnant women, no matter their age, be offered testing for Down Syndrome. Previously, women 35 years and older were automatically offered testing for the condition, according to ACOG. Pro-life advocates decried the recommendation, saying it would increase the number of unborn Down syndrome children targeted for elimination.

REVIVALS AND HOMECOMINGS

Gumpound Church, Lumberton: Revival, Mar. 30 - Apr. 2; Sun., 11 a.m. and 6 p.m.; Mon. - Wed., 7 p.m.; Allan Sanders, speaker; Jason Walley, music; Joe Harper, pianist.

Seventh Annual Community Revival, Southwest Attala: Apr. 6 - 11; 7 p.m. nightly; Apr. 6, Shiloh Methodist Protestant, Kelly Mitchell; Apr. 7, Mt. Pleasant Congregational Methodist, James E. Young; Apr. 8, McAdams Church, Dwayne Cole; Apr. 9, Harmonia Congregational Methodist, Paul Cain; Apr. 10, Bowlin Church, Tommy Wicker; Apr. 11, Sallis Church, Billy Frazure. For more information, call Tommy Wicker, (662) 289-6166.

West Tallahatchie Church, Myrtle: Revival, Apr. 13 - 16; Sun., 6:30 p.m.; Mon. - Wed., 7 p.m.; Jimmy Russell, speaker;

Bobby J. Casteel, pastor.

Philadelphia Church, Etta: Revival, Mar. 30 - Apr. 2, Sun. a.m. through Wed. p.m.; Danny Irvin, speaker; Gerald Fredrick, music; for information, call pastor Bobby Irvin @ (662) 236-5315.

Utica Church, Utica: Revival, Apr. 6 - 9; Sun., 10:30 a.m.; Sun. - Wed., 7 p.m.; David Leavell and Landrum Leavell, speakers; Bradley White, music; Ben James, pastor.

First Church, Helena, Moss Point: Revival, Apr. 6 - 13, in honor of Robbie Howard's 50 years of ministry; Sun., 11 a.m. and 6 p.m.; weekdays, 7 p.m.; Glen Savell, Randy Byrd, Wilton Bennett, Alton Byrd, Michael Rowell, Roscoe Wentworth, Randy Von Kanel, Bryce Evans, Johnny Tucker, and Willie Wimbs, speakers; Bob & Chris

Henley, Ronnie Cottingham, Gilbert Emerson, music.

Plainway Church, Laurel: Homecoming, Apr. 6; Harold Ishee, speaker. For information, call (601) 426-6505.

Cedar View Church, Olive Branch: Revival, Mar. 30 - Apr. 2; Sun., 11 a.m., followed by dinner on the grounds and 6 p.m.; Mon. - Wed., 7 p.m.; P.J. Scott, speaker.

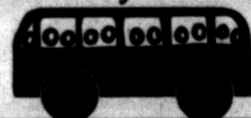
First Church, Eupora: Revival, Apr. 13 - 16; Sun., 11 a.m. and 6 p.m.; Mon. - Wed., 7 p.m.; Chip Henderson, speaker; Dale Townsend, music.

Liberty Hill Church, Pope: Revival, Mar. 30 - Apr. 2; Sun., 11 a.m. and 6 p.m.; Mon. - Wed., 7 p.m.; Gene Douglas, speaker; Andrew Bassinger, music; Jay Anderson, pastor.



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China intent on silencing Christians before Olympics

NASHVILLE, Tenn. (BP) — With increased frequency, the Chinese government is persecuting house churches and banishing foreign Christians from the country, presumably to squelch voices who might draw attention to the plight of religious minorities in the nation prior to and during the Beijing Olympics this summer.

"We seem to be seeing a crackdown ahead of the Olympics. Whether that's to send a message to the church to lay low or whether it is to make sure that anybody who might cause international embarrassment is taken care of ahead of time, I don't know," Todd Nettleton, a spokesman for Voice of the Martyrs, told Baptist Press, "but we do see an increase in the level of arrests, the level of house church services being raided, that sort of activity."

"We also have seen a number of foreigners who are Christians who, when the time came to renew their visa they have been denied a new visa and told that they had to leave the country, so it's happening both amongst the house churches of native Chinese people as well as foreign Christians who are living and working in China. They're finding that they're no longer welcome."

Nettleton noted that about 20% of China's Christians are part of the official church, the so-called Three Self Patriotic Movement or the Catholic version approved by the government, while the other 80% go to unregistered or unofficial churches.

"They don't actually have permission from the government to meet together, so their activities are illegal and they can be arrested, they can serve time in prison, their meetings can be broken up because they don't have that official government seal of approval on their meetings," Nettleton said of the 80% who attend unregistered or unofficial churches.

Nettleton said his best guess for the increase in persecution is that the Chinese government views the Beijing Olympics, scheduled for Aug. 8-24, as sort of a coming-out party where the eyes of the world will be on them.

"The Olympics are a huge event, there will be a huge amount of international attention focused on China," he said. "They want to make sure that they put their best foot forward, and having Christians doing some sort of protest or drawing attention to the religious freedom situation there would not be good PR. It would not make a good impression on the visitors from around the

world, so they're going to do everything they can to make sure that doesn't happen."

China Aid Association (CAA), in its 2007 Persecution Report released in February, said the 60 reported cases of persecution against house churches in China last year was up 30.4% from 2006. CAA, a Christian rights defense organization, is based in Texas.

The total number of people persecuted last year was 788, up 18.5% from 2006, China Aid said regarding 2007 statistics, and the total number of people arrested and detained was 693, up 6%. Sixteen people were sentenced to imprisonment, down 5%, according to China Aid records.

"Besides these figures, two types of cases need special attention. There are 17 cases of physical abuse in the persecution (beating, torture and psychological abuse), up 325% from that of 2006, and the number abused was 35,

up 400%," China Aid said. "The other type is that many foreign Christians also suffered persecution mainly in the form of arrest, interrogation, and expulsion from the country. The total number of people in this category is over 100 (84 of them are confirmed), up 833% from the year before."

China Aid, in its persecution report, identified four categories of persecution: against house church leaders, against house churches in urban areas, against Christian publications, and against foreign Christians and missionaries.

Among the foreign Christians and missionaries who were interrogated and expelled from China, most were from the West and a few were from South

Korea and other countries, China Aid said.

"Some of these foreign Christians were not missionaries, but had their own secular professions in China," the report said. "However, as they preached the Christian belief or were associated with local Christians and churches, they were persecuted by the government."

"This is the largest persecution operation of expelling foreign Christians since the early 1950s when the [Communist Party of China] drove out all of the foreign missionaries."

Nettleton of Voice of the Martyrs said that despite the crackdown he doesn't see a high probability of Western Christians being harassed during the Beijing Olympics.

"I know there are some groups who are specifically going to work on evangelism efforts during the Olympics. I



HOUSE CHURCH — House churches in Harbin, China, meet weekly for several hours at a time. To avoid attracting too much attention, the groups often move from home to home, meeting in different locations each week. Still, many groups, like this one, have grown as curious neighbors are led to Christ. Reports indicate the Chinese government has embarked on a campaign to silence Christians and dissidents before the start of the Summer Olympics later this year. (Photo courtesy of International Mission Board)



OLYMPIC SYMBOL — Signs pointing to the 2008 Summer Olympics are increasingly evident in Beijing, China, but the country's communist government is apparently intent on ensuring that the image they are carefully cultivating for the Olympics will not be tarnished by protest and dissent. (Photo courtesy of International Mission Board)

don't know how it will be different from what they did in Athens [in 2004] other than the fact that in China they will need to keep a little lower profile," Nettleton said.

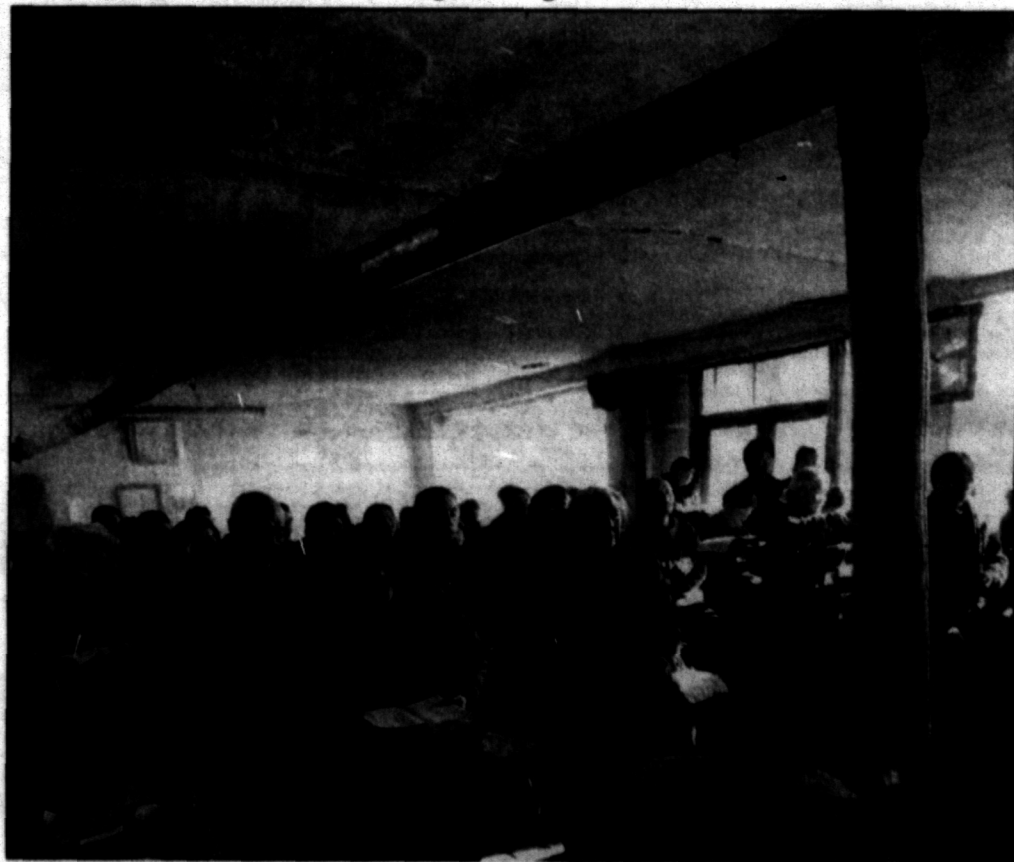
"They'll need to be a little more cautious about the nature of their activities, about what they're doing, about drawing attention to themselves, but the reality is that, in my opinion, the chances of a foreigner being arrested for religious activities during the Olympics are very slim because the world will be watching and the Chinese government is so aware of the need for good PR and the need to sort of make this problem go away," he added.

The United States Commission on International Religious Freedom in February urged President Bush to request to meet with people detained by the Chinese government for religious

reasons when he attends the Olympics in August. The commission also asked Bush to attend an unregistered house church to draw attention to the Chinese government's religious freedom violations.

Bush, during a White House news conference Feb. 28, said he would raise concerns about freedom of religion in China when he meets with Chinese President Hu Jintao in August.

"Every time I meet with him I talk about religious freedom and the importance of China's society recognizing that if you're allowed to worship freely, it will benefit the society as a whole; that the Chinese government should not fear the idea of people praying to a God as they see fit," Bush said. "A whole society, a healthy society, a confident society is one that recognizes the value of religious freedom."



COLD, CONTROLLED — In a rural registered church on the outskirts of Harbin, China, a crude stove does little to cut the cold. Leaders of Harbin's registered churches, which are controlled by the communist government, openly express concern about the future of established churches, often void of youth and young professionals. (Photo courtesy of International Mission Board)

THE VILLAGE VIEW



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Hattie Maude Gowan
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Mutt Graves
Ladies Bible Class
Bill Green
Mr. & Mrs. William F. Harris
Ed Greer
Hopewell Baptist Church
Ray Griffin
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Adult IV SSC, Walthall BC-Walthall
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Mrs. Rachel Harding
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Glenda & Jerry Fry
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Magnolia Beautification
Boyd Hudson
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Mrs. Nellie Jackson
Mr. & Mrs. B. A. Anders
Galilee Baptist Church-Gloster
Mr. & Mrs. Jerry Jackson
Sister-in-law of Frank James
Glenda & Jerry Fry
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Mr. & Mrs. Robert Sullivan
James H. Johnson
Mr. & Mrs. Glynn Jones
Mr. Bink Johnson
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Dr. & Mrs. Linuel D. Jayroe
Ehrhidge Jones
Agape SSC, Bovina BC-Vicksburg
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Martha & Hilton Ray
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Mr. Charles E. Kirby
Mr. & Mrs. Ben L. Lamensdorf
Mr. & Mrs. Bill Newsum
Mr. & Mrs. Clifton Porter
Ms. Cheryl L. Saunders
Ronnie Lee
Mr. & Mrs. Kenneth E. Lee
Willard Leonard
Mr. & Mrs. Larry R. Sasser
Daniel Lofton
Mr. & Mrs. Larry R. Sasser
Kaye Lofton
Mr. & Mrs. Larry R. Sasser
Margaret May Bethea Maddox
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Bob Mason
Mr. & Mrs. Stuart Allen
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Mrs. Gloria Mayberry
Spring Hill Baptist Church
Bill McCarter
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Russell D. "Rusty" McKee
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Mr. & Mrs. Eugene L. Culpepper
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Mrs. Edna Miller
Mr. Wiley T. Williams
W. L. Minchell
Mr. & Mrs. Billy Joe Williams
Mrs. Donna Mullins
Mr. & Mrs. Billy Joe Williams
Mrs. Gladys Mullins
Senior Adult Class, Mt Pisgah BC
Rev. Joe Nanney
Mr. & Mrs. Billy Joe Williams
Mrs. Doty Newton
Mr. & Mrs. Billy Joe Williams
Carolyn Breland O'Neal
Mr. & Mrs. Billy Joe Williams

BCV Employment Opportunities

The Baptist Children's Village is now accepting applications through March 31, 2008 for openings on the India Nunnery Campus in Jackson and the Reedy Acres Campus in Water Valley for the position of houseparent.

The primary job responsibility of a houseparent is to maintain a home-like environment that models healthy, Christian family living for children and/or youth residents. Other duties of a houseparent are many and are varied and somewhat dependent upon the specific program and cottage to which assigned. The following list of responsibilities is to provide an overview of the job and is not an exhaustive list.

Job responsibilities:

- Provide immediate supervision of residents in the cottage and other settings
- Participate fully in the implementation of each resident's Plan of Care
- Model Christian values and lifestyle for residents and their families
- Model a healthy physical, social and emotional lifestyle for residents
- Serve as the primary transportation resource for residents of assigned cottage

Job requirements:

- 25-65 years of age
- A husband/wife team will be considered for this position
- Good physical, mental and emotional health
- Stable, even disposition
- Valid driver's license with a good driving record
- Educational background must be at a minimum a GED, but some college is preferred
- Experience in child rearing is preferred
- Must be flexible and able to work in a team environment
- Good organizational skills

To request an application please contact Celeste Cade at ccade@baptistchildrensvillage.com or call 601-922-2242.

BIBLE STUDIES FOR LIFE

Living 3:16—With Passion for Jesus

Revelation 1:9-13, 17-18; 3:14-22

By Rick Henson

Recently Kay and her granddaughter came into our fellowship hall for Wednesday night supper. Kay was smiling and shared with us what her granddaughter said. As they drove on the way to Oakdale by another church with a cemetery, the little girl asked, "Mimi, why don't we have dead people at our church?" We laughed and agreed that Oakdale is a live church.

During the next week I thought often about what the little girl said. I realized that our church is alive because it does have dead people. The Scripture is full of paradoxes like this. Luke 9:23-24 teaches, "If anyone wants to come with

Me, he must deny himself, take up his cross daily, and follow Me. For whoever wants to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life because of Me will save it." Galatians 5:24 further states, "Those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires." In order to be a live church, its members must die to self and live to Christ.

Jesus said in John 9:39, "I came into this world for judgment, in order that those who do not see will see and those who do see will become blind." To see, we must admit that we are blind. The church at Laodicea thought they had everything, though they were blind. Obviously some of its

Henson

members were wealthy. Laodicea was a prosperous city in what is western Turkey today. Jesus condemned the church "because you say, 'I'm rich; I have become wealthy, and need nothing, and you don't know that you are wretched, pitiful, poor, blind, and naked,'"

Revelation 3:17. If the church at Laodicea were here today, it would have a fine sanctuary, impressive education facilities, and active family life center. The church at Laodicea would be busy today, but not with loving Jesus. People in the community would be impressed with the church at Laodicea, but Jesus is unimpressed. Jesus announced His judgment in Revelation 3:16, "So, because you are lukewarm, and neither hot nor cold, I am going to vomit you out of My mouth." He rebuked the church because they were self-sufficient, and not Christ-suf-

ficient.

The city of Laodicea was on an important trade route, though its water supply was several miles away. The city's water source was a hot spring in a nearby mountain near a city named Thermopolis. People traveled to the spring in Thermopolis to soak in its natural heat. However, by the time the water flowed through the aqueduct a few miles, its temperature had dropped from tantalizing to tepid, from wonderful to just warm. Imagine ice tea at room temperature or hot tea after an hour in the cup. When Jesus called the church lukewarm, they knew what He meant. They previously were hot for Him, but had cooled off rapidly. Just as the water cooled as it left its source, so the church had cooled as it left the Lord Jesus. The further they were from Jesus; the cooler was their love for Him.

Jesus called for the church to repent. A gospel song from the 1970's claimed, "I keep falling in love with Him over

and over over again." The fire that burned in the hearts of the Laodiceans had cooled, so that they made Jesus sick. They needed to fall in love with Jesus again.

To live for Christ in our post 9/11 world, each believer must remain in love with the Lord Jesus. Jesus told that church He stands at the door and knocks, awaiting their reply. Though this passage is often used in evangelistic invitations, it was originally spoken to backslidden believers. Jesus makes the same offer today. Revelation 3:20, "If anyone hears My voice and opens the door, I will come in to him and have dinner with him, and he with Me." Jesus desires fellowship with every believer. He is knocking at the door. Are you too busy to hear Him, or too lukewarm-hearted to respond? Are you self-sufficient, or Christ-sufficient? Spend some time with Jesus. You will fall in love with Him all over again.

Henson is pastor of Oakdale Church, Brandon

EXPLORE THE BIBLE

Renewing Commitment

Genesis 34:30-31; 35:1-7, 9-12, 14-15

By Marion D. Duncan

Jacob had experienced the total unconditional forgiveness of his twin brother Esau and went on to establish himself in the land of Canaan near the city of Shechem. God had warned Jacob that his sons and daughters should not marry Canaanites, but Jacob put them in a place of temptation just as Lot had done (Gen. 13:9-11). Dinah, the daughter born to Jacob by Leah, went out to visit the women of the land—to size them up, to learn the latest styles, and to get a look at the young men. It is probable that she had been often and mixed freely in the society. According to Josephus, the historian, she had been to a festival when she was defiled by Shechem, son of Hamor, a ruler of that area (A Commentary, Critical and

Explanatory, on the Old and New Testaments). In a family with multiple wives, protection of the daughters fell on the full brothers. Dinah's brothers, Simeon and Levi, devised a plan for brutal revenge against Hamor and Shechem. Hamor went to Jacob and asked that his son be allowed to marry Dinah because of his great love and desire for her. Using the religious rite of circumcision as a guise of arbitration, Jacob's sons suggested that all of the males of the city be circumcised, and thus, become eligible to marry women of God's people. While the men were recuperating from circumcision, Simeon and Levi, deceitful like their father, took their swords and killed every male, rescued Dinah, looted the city and the fields, and carried off

Duncan

the women and children and plundered the houses. In Genesis 34:30-31, Jacob selfishly reprimanded his sons for their actions, not for the sin they committed, but because they had put him in a position of danger from the Canaanites and Perizzites living in the land.

God instructed Jacob to return to Bethel where He had appeared to him (Gen. 28:19) and build an altar to Him. Jacob told his people to purify themselves and change clothes. He collected all of their foreign gods and gold earrings and buried them under the oak at Shechem. God prevented the people of the surrounding towns from pursuing them, and the company of people arrived safely at Bethel (Luz) in Canaan. Jacob built the altar and called the place El Bethel, the God of Bethel, because it was there that God had revealed Himself to Jacob when he fled from Esau. A backslidden Christian

does not need a new experience, just a fresh return to the old experience.

Deborah, Rebekah's nurse, had come from Isaac's household and to Jacob's at some point. She could have been one hundred and eighty years old at her death and had been an invaluable service to Jacob's young family. Nurses like her were honored and loved as mothers; therefore, her death was an occasion of great lamenting. She was buried under the oak below Bethel.

God appeared again to Jacob and blessed him. God reminded him that he would no longer be Jacob, he deceives, but his name would be Israel, he struggles with God. God renewed the promise to Jacob He made to Abraham and Isaac. Jacob set up a pillar of stone to mark the place where God talked to him, poured a drink offering and oil on it, and called the place Bethel, house of God.

Jacob's company moved on from Bethel, but had not reached Ephrath when Rachel began to go into labor with her

expected child. She had great difficulty birthing the child, but her midwife comforted her by telling her that she had another son, the only one born to Jacob in Canaan. In her dying breath, she named the son Ben-Oni, child of my trouble. But his father named him Benjamin, son of my right hand. Rachel, Jacob's true love, was buried on the way to Ephrath, which is Bethlehem. Jacob set up a pillar over the tomb to mark Rachel's grave.

Reuben was Jacob's first son born to Leah who had great expectations of him (29:32). Jacob said in Genesis 49:3-4 that Reuben could have excelled in honor and power, but he was too turbulent or unstable. He slept with his father's concubine, Bilhah, and Jacob heard about it. The consequence was loss of his birthright which was given to Judah and Joseph (1 Chron. 5:1-2).

God did make Jacob a mighty nation, the Edomites, who were enemies of God's chosen people for centuries.

Duncan is WMU director at First Church, Starkville

Guidelines for submitting news and photographs

The Baptist Record is pleased to publish news and photographs of special events that take place in cooperating churches of the Mississippi Baptist Convention.

News submitted for publication in The Baptist Record must be either (a) typewritten, (b) neatly printed on 8 1/2 by 11-inch paper, or (c) neatly printed on standardized forms provided by the newspaper. All articles must be received in writing; no articles will be accepted over the telephone.

News may be submitted electronically to the address below, and must be contained in the message segment of an e-mail form. Due to increasing virus threats, no text attachments will

be accepted. Photograph attachments are permissible.

Please make articles concise. Include the who, what, when, where details of the story, along with a contact person's address and telephone number.

Photographs may be color or black and white. Instant photos and digital printouts are not reproducible. Digital photos may be used if submitted as a JPEG file via either (a) e-mail, (b) three-and-a-half inch floppy disk, or (c) CD. Photos must be

clear, sharp, and well-lighted. Photographs can not be returned. Please do not attach photos with tape or staples.

All news items are subject to editing, and all photographs are subject to cropping. Photographs must depict people. No landscape, building, or object-only photographs will be printed. News items and/or photographs can be published one time only. Deadline for submitting news is one week prior to requested publication date.

Articles that are not date-sensitive will be published on a space-available basis.

Submit news and photographs to The Baptist Record, P.O. Box 530, Jackson, MS 39205-0530. FAX: (601) 292-3330. E-mail: baptistrecord@mbcb.org.

THE BAPTIST
Record

NAMB intent on planting new, evangelistic churches

ALPHARETTA, Ga. (BP) — Why does the Southern Baptist Convention need to start even more churches than the 43,000-plus now on the books?

David Meacham, senior strategist for church planting with the North American Mission Board (NAMB), says it's because Christian denominations — especially the 16-million-member Southern Baptist Convention (SBC) — regard planting new churches as the single most effective way to evangelize.

New churches, Meacham said, simply do a better job of reaching more people for Christ than long-established churches.

"A three-year-old church is only half as effective in reaching people for the Lord as it was in its early days," Meacham noted, "and once a church is 15 years old, it becomes only one-third as effective."

Reflecting the overall current deficit in new church planting, Meacham cited a 10-year study of 300,000 Christian churches in America by Dave Olson, director of

church planting for the Evangelical Covenant Church. The research indicated that 3,200 churches close their doors each year in America, while only 3,600 churches are started.

"That resulted in a net gain of 4,600 churches between 1990 and 2000," Meacham said, "but to have kept pace with population growth during that decade, a net gain of some 39,000 new churches were needed."

Stated another way, Meacham said during the past 10 years, the overall membership of Protestant denominations in America has declined 9.5%, while the national population as increased by 11%.

To emphasize the need for Southern Baptist churches to plant new churches throughout North America, Meacham said the SBC has designated Sunday, March 30, or any future Sunday, as On Mission Together: Planting New Congregations Sunday.

"By dedicating a special day to focus on planting new churches, we hoped it would

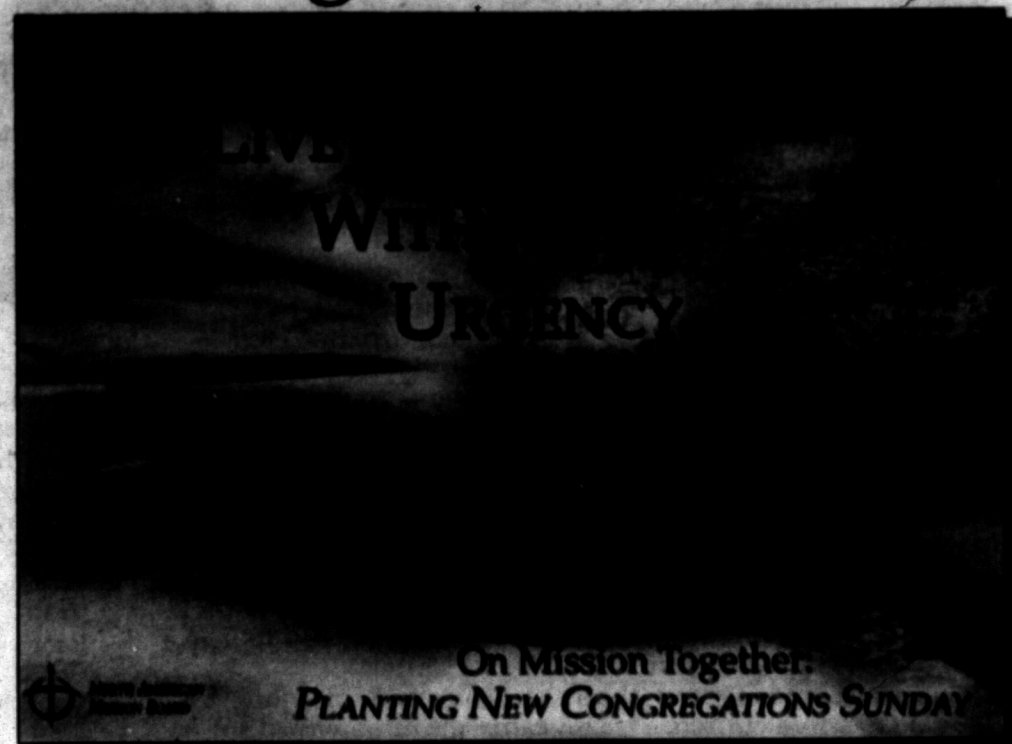
inspire and motivate existing churches and individual members to recognize their communities as mission fields and to be used by God to start new churches," Meacham said.

According to NAMB statistics, there were 29 churches for every 10,000 Americans in 1900; 17 churches for every 10,000 Americans in 1950; 12 churches for every 10,000 in 2000; and only 11 churches for every 10,000 in 2004.

"Clearly, we are losing ground with each passing year," Meacham said. "We have a growing evangelistic deficit in America that will best be answered by starting new churches."

"Newly planted churches also speak the language of the next generation. New churches are often led by younger pastors who know the subtleties of the culture. What they lack in experience, they make up for with a pioneering spirit."

Meacham said a package of "Planting New Congregations



Sunday" promotional materials for churches is available online from NAMB, including posters, clip art, sermon outlines, PowerPoint presentations, videos and extensive information on church planting. The package is free and downloadable at <http://www.churchplantingvillage.net>.

Editor's note: For questions or to obtain assistance in holding a Planting New Congregations Sunday (if not on March 30, some other Sunday during the year) call Shelby Bork at (770) 410-6223 at the North American Mission Board or e-mail discoverchurchplanting@namb.net.

New Apologetics Study Bible available from LifeWay bookstores

NASHVILLE, Tenn. (BP) — Apologetics, the term for defending the Christian faith, has a new ally: The Apologetics Study Bible, which teaches Christians how to present and proclaim their beliefs in an age of spiritual relativism.

Released by the B&H Publishing Group of LifeWay Christian Resources of the Southern Baptist Convention, The Apologetics Study Bible (ASB) includes articles from modern apologists such as Chuck Colson, Norm Geisler, Hank Hanegraaff, Josh McDowell, J.P. Moreland, and Ravi Zacharias. Ted Cabal served as general editor.

Cabal, professor of Christian philosophy and applied apologetics at Southern Seminary in Louisville, Ky., has lived on both sides of the spiritual belief spectrum and can relate to those who question Christianity.

Cabal was an atheist until age 20 when he became a Christian after reading the New Testament. "My conversion is like that of all Christians," he said. "The Holy Spirit impressed on my heart the Good News of Christ found in the Bible."

Cabal said he would have benefited from a resource like The Apologetics Study Bible had it been available years ago. "As a skeptic, my questions provided me an excuse to ignore Christianity," he said. "If I could have read something like the ASB, I would have found answers in the same volume containing God's supernatural Word."

"After my conversion, I continued to have questions that took years for me to research and answer. The ASB contains the equivalent of many years of faithful, cutting-edge research from dozens of scholars that is presented in a simple format. What I would have given for such a resource to help me back then!"

A solid apologetic, Cabal said, can

yield a number of benefits. "Basic help in apologetics like that provided in the ASB is essential for a Christian's own spiritual health," he said, noting that unbelievers and believers alike have sincere questions about spiritual matters.

Apologetics can undergird a person's witness, Cabal said. "Evangelism automatically entails apologetics. Whenever someone provides reasons for rejecting our presentation of Christ, we must gently respond with truth revealing why their reasons are wrong and why they should reconsider the Bible's claims."

"Sensitive use of apologetics is just that method of applying truth to the lies that keep people from accepting Christ."

Articles throughout the ASB include topics such as, Is the Old Testament Trustworthy?; Can Biblical Chronology Be Trusted?; What is the Relationship between Science and the Bible?; Does the Bible Contain Errors?; and Does the Bible Teach Reincarnation?

Steve Bond, editorial director for Bibles and Bible reference books at B&H Publishing Group, said he hopes The Apologetics Study Bible will help Christians make a positive case for the truth of Christianity.

"Christians must be able to respond constructively and persuasively to critics of historic Christian faith," he said, and they must be able to recognize the inadequacies of other worldviews.

"The marketplace of ideas is filled with many incompatible claims about what is true," Bond said. "God has built into each of us a sense that all of these conflicting claims can't be true. How do we test these claims for truth? Why should we embrace historic Christian faith rather than Islam or the claims of Latter-day Saints, or of atheists?"

"Knowing what we believe and why has been an important part of being a Christian since the first Christians con-

fessed that Jesus is Lord. The apostles and the women who testified to Jesus' resurrection were the first apologists and the tradition has continued from that world-rocking event."

Ray Clendenen, who heads B & H Academic and was the ASB's associate editor, pointed out that the annotated bibliography included at the back of the study Bible features literature which helps Christians present the Gospel clearly to skeptics and prepares Christians to respond to faith objections.

"We encounter these objections from movies, TV and other media as well as from non-Christian or even Christian friends wrestling with life," Clendenen said. "Sometimes we come up with our own problems and need help in dealing with them. The intellectual cafeteria of ideas in this postmodern world is full of choices about what to believe — other philosophies, religions, cults, atheism and agnosticism."

"The challenge is that sadly perhaps the majority of Christians don't read many books that make us think, even

those that help us deal with challenges to the faith, but all Christians can and must have a Bible. The idea of the ASB

was to distill the best of the literature into bite-size chunks that an average Christian can comprehend and use."

The ASB contains more than just articles, Clendenen added, pointing out that detailed notes in the text deal with challenging verses and call attention to those that instruct believers in how to present the Gospel.

"Some of the notes just explain what a difficult verse

means," he said. "There are also more than 50 notes attached to various Scriptures that people sometimes twist to make them say things they were never intended to say. Many people may find interesting the brief biographies of 12 famous apologists like C.S. Lewis. There are also some very useful charts in the back that are beautifully done."

"Our prayer is that this Bible will help Christians obey Jesus' command to make disciples and to teach them all that Jesus has commanded," Clendenen said.

